

Fedora 10: the GNU/Linux Desktop Steps Forward

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Any release of a GNU/Linux distribution marks a milestone in a continuous cycle of software development. However, Fedora 10 promises to be a larger milestone than most, both for its development community and users, according to Paul W. Frields, the Fedora leader and chair.

On the one hand, its release on November 25 is being accomplished despite a major security problem and the need to deal with a rapidly growing community ? and reputation ? in the free and open source software (FOSS) ecosystem. On the other hand, in many ways the release could be seen as an infrastructure release, with many of the changes being either improvements of existing features, or the first stage in the ongoing development of new features.

The release has been delayed three to four weeks thanks to a major security breach in the Fedora and Red Hat repositories that was discovered in mid-August and not fixed until September 10th. This is not a major slip, Frields points out, considering that earlier releases have been delayed one or two weeks for mere bug-fixing, but the effort to avoid even further slippage was intense. Following best practices for security and taking no chances, the Fedora infrastructure team spent a hectic few weeks rebuilding the distro's repository system from the ground up, also taking the opportunity to add a few improvements at the same time.

As the result of the security crisis, Fedora now plans to issue new encrypted authentication keys for all its repositories with each release as a general precaution. A less stressful but still demanding background issue is the rapid growth of the community.

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